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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF
MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
Fourth meeting
Bonn, 1 November 1999

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND
OFFICIALS ON THE WORK OF ITS FOURTH MEETING

Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, was held at the Hotel Maritim, in Bonn, Germany, on 1 November 1999.

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened at 10.30 a.m. on Monday, 1 November 1999, by Mr. Simon K. Moyo, Minister of Mines, Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe, Chair of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials. In his opening statement, Mr. Moyo noted the very full agenda facing the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its current meeting and recalled that the work of the Committee at previous sessions had provided the firm basis on which the Governing Council had been able to prepare the important input of UNEP to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

3. Following those opening remarks, the Committee was addressed by Mr. Tahar Hadj-Sadok, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, speaking on behalf of Mr. Zammit Cutajar, the Executive Secretary. In his statement, Mr. Hadj-Sadok commended the idea of organizing the meeting of the Committee on the margins of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, as it provided for valuable synergies between the two bodies. The secretariat of the Framework

Convention welcomed strengthened cooperation with UNEP and with other environmental conventions.

4. On the issue of globalization and climate change, he pointed out that, while global solutions must be sought to the problem of climate change, there must also be differentiated approaches for the different countries and regions. He also noted the importance of interlinkages of trade and the environment, an issue that was addressed under the Kyoto Protocol, including through the development of its emissions-trading initiative, and through efforts to motivate transnational corporations to take into consideration climate-change effects.

5. The Committee was then addressed by Mr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, who welcomed participants to the fourth meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, its last meeting in the twentieth century. Noting the profound threat posed to the environment by global poverty, he stressed the need for an integrated approach to addressing the problem of poverty and therefore welcomed the decision to convene the current meeting on the margins of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Recalling discussion at the Committee's second and third meetings on the need to streamline the structure of UNEP, he informed members that that process had now been implemented and he hoped to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new integrated structure during the course of the current meeting and expressed gratitude to the Government which had contributed to the process.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE MEETING

A. Attendance

6. The meeting was attended by the following 24 members of the Committee, who had been elected by the Governing Council at its twentieth session, on 5 February 1999, on the basis of nominations by their respective regional groups, to serve as members of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, in accordance with paragraph (b) of Governing Council decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997: Argentina, Burundi, Canada, China, Congo, Cuba, Finland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovakia, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

7. The following States Members of the United Nations were represented by observers: Australia, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Haiti, Holy See, Iceland, Italy, Jordan, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Sudan, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

8. The European Community was also represented.

9. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were also represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

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10. A representative of the following intergovernmental organization attended the meeting: Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

11. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations were also present at the meeting: Global Crop Protection Federation (GCPF), World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World Conservation Union (IUCN), World Wide Fund for Nature International (WWF).

12. In accordance with paragraph 2 of Governing Council decision 19/32, the meeting was also attended by the following: Mr. Lázló Miklós (Slovakia), President of the Governing Council of UNEP; Mr. Leandro Arellano (Mexico), Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP; Mr. German Garcia-Duran (Colombia), Chair of the Nairobi Chapter of the Group of 77; Mr. Isslamet Poernomo (Indonesia), Chair of Subcommittee I of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP; Mr. Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), coordinator of the open-ended informal consultations of the General Assembly on the report of the Secretary-General on Environment and Human Settlements and Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF); Mr. Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and Mr. Tahar Hadj-Sadok, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

13. The full list of participants is contained in document UNEP/HLC/4/INF/5.

B. Officers

14. In accordance with the decision taken by the Committee under item 7, on the election of the Bureau of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials for the period 1999-2001 (see chapter VII below), the regional allocation of positions on the Bureau remained in force for the current meeting and the incumbents of those positions remained in office, except for the post of Vice-Chair held by the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries, which passed to the representative of Peru. The Bureau was therefore constituted as follows:

Chair: Mr. Simon Khaya Moyo (Zimbabwe)

Vice-Chair: Mr. Wang Zhijia (China)
Mr. Gonzalo Galdos (Peru)
Mr. Jan Szyszko (Poland)

Rapporteur: Mr. Philippe Roch (Switzerland)

C. Adoption of the agenda

15. The Committee adopted the following agenda, on the basis of the provisional agenda circulated in document UNEP/HLC/4/1:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work of the meeting.

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3. Report of the Executive Director on recent activities of the United Nations Environment Programme.
4. Contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme to the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.
5. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999: Report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements.
6. Response of the environment to the phenomenon of globalization.
7. Election of the Bureau of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials for the period 1999-2001.
8. Other matters
9. Adoption of the report of the meeting.
10. Closure of the meeting

D. Organization of work

16. At the first session of the meeting, the Committee decided that the agenda would be addressed primarily in two plenary sessions. The Committee also agreed to take up item 6, on the response of the environment to the phenomenon of globalization, in a panel discussion on the theme of globalization, agriculture and the environment.

E. Documentation

17. The documentation before the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its fourth meeting is listed in annex II below.

III. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON RECENT ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

18. Under the item, the Executive Director introduced his report on recent activities of UNEP (UNEP/HLC/4/INF/1), highlighting work by the organization in the five areas of concentration identified by the Governing Council and in fulfilment of the goals of the Nairobi Declaration. He also drew attention to the recently launched second report in the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) series, GEO-2000, which, he said, was not merely a comprehensive policy-relevant report on the state of the global environment, but also an authoritative assessment of the environmental crisis facing humanity in the coming millennium.

19. The GEO-2000 report had been prepared in a collaborative process involving more than 30 centres and 850 individuals, representing an important model of participatory action. He pointed out that the report was only a summary, building on a number of far more detailed regional reports. In addition, a youth version, called Pachamama, meaning "mother Earth" in the

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Quechua language, had also been launched and work was already under way on preparations for GEO-3.

20. He stressed that GEO-2000, while it identified many critical problems for the environment, was not a doomsday report but also contained many success stories and reported on encouraging trends.

21. He also informed members of the work of the joint UNEP/United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) Task Force on Environment and Settlements in the Balkans, which had submitted its findings to the Secretary-General. The Task Force had concluded that the environmental problems which it addressed had regional implications, affecting, in particular, countries downstream on the river Danube, and were connected also with a legacy of past environmental mismanagement. He noted that requests had been submitted to UNEP for the establishment of similar teams for other regions, but that there was no provision in its budget for such measures.

22. Ms. Verle Vandeweerd, Coordinator of the Global Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, introduced the UNEP water policy and strategy, currently being finalized, the policy objectives of which derived from Agenda 21 and the resolutions and decisions, respectively, of the General Assembly and the Governing Council. Describing the framework of the water policy and strategy, she noted that its main focuses were on assessment, management and coordination and that the major water programmes for UNEP for the period 2000-2001 were the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA); the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; the regional seas programme; freshwater; and activities under the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Outlining the organizational structure for the implementation of the UNEP water programmes and their major area of concentration and objectives, she said that action would be conducted at national, regional and global levels, involving, inter alia, the development of policy and legislation, capacity-building and the development of a clearing-house mechanism. She informed the meeting that the clearing-house of the Global Programme of Action had now been launched and was accessible on the internet.

23. She listed the main policy objectives and strategic directions of the regional seas programme and of UNEP freshwater activities and indicated the main strategic thrusts of GEF-supported activities in the areas of international waters. In conclusion, she reaffirmed the targets of the UNEP water policy and its commitment to sustainable development in the management of that precious resource.

24. Following those presentations, a number of representatives, some also speaking on behalf of groups of countries, commended UNEP on its more dynamic performance and more transparent approach and welcomed the new integrated structure. The GEO-2000 report was applauded, in particular, as a flagship product, and one representative announced his country's plans to translate the report into Portuguese.

25. In the ensuing discussion, representatives drew attention, inter alia, to the "blue flag" initiative, which UNEP was urged to support; to the ongoing negotiations on persistent organic pollutants (POPs); and to the need

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for increased capacity-building efforts. Several speakers raised the issue of transboundary watercourses and the need for regional approaches, although one representative pointed out the need to respect existing international agreements relating to those watercourses and another noted that the UNEP freshwater policy should not run counter to the provisions of international conventions. One representative, while recognizing the benefit of a comprehensive approach to water issues, stressed the need - within that integrated approach - for separate and differentiated approaches to marine, coastal and freshwater issues and, accordingly, urged UNEP to give more support to the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) water programme. UNEP was urged, in particular, to give closer attention to freshwater issues and to integrate the GEMS/Water programme fully with its other programmes. Another suggested that the success of UNEP in addressing ozone layer issues should be replicated in its carbon-dioxide emissions-related work, in particular, through efforts to promote the widest possible involvement of countries in that work.

26. Several representatives drew attention to the importance of freshwater issues in their countries, which were subject to drought and desertification, and to the problem of desertification, particularly in the South. In that context, they stressed the need for the promotion of renewable energy sources to meet the growing energy needs of the growing populations in the South. Attention was also drawn to the interrelationship between freshwater, waste and agricultural inputs and UNEP was encouraged to continue and to strengthen its role in addressing problems in that area, including through the promotion of best practices, with a view to avoiding past mistakes in freshwater management, and through the incorporation of capacity-building in both the GEO process and in its water strategy.

27. Other needs identified by speakers included the promotion of integrated coastal area management in Africa; increased efforts in coral reef and mangrove conservation; greater attention to the issue of desalination; enhanced collaboration and coordination among environment-related conventions; and a strengthened role for UNEP in the area of trade and environment interlinkages, in particular, through the World Trade Organization (WTO). One representative stressed the need for UNEP to revitalize its environmental monitoring and assessment activities, which, he said, should be on the agenda of the sixth special session of the Governing Council.

28. Recalling Governing Council decision 20/26 of 4 February 1999, requesting the Executive Director to promote the transfer of environmentally sound technologies for freshwater management through the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), the representative of Japan noted the good work being done by IETC and pledged his country's continued support for the Centre. He encouraged the widest possible use of the Centre by other countries as well. In addition, he stressed the need to implement all the mandated activities of the four regional activity centres of the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region (NOWPAP) and to establish the regional coordinating centre for NOWPAP. In that context, he conveyed Japan's interest in hosting the unit, on condition that an invited country would bear due expenses and that Japan would take the initiative for establishing the framework for the efficient operation of NOWPAP.

29. The representative of a Balkan State expressed the wish - which, he said, was shared by some other countries in the region - that the terms of reference of the Balkan Task Force could be extended to cover those countries, which had also been affected by the armed conflict in Yugoslavia. In that context, the representative of Switzerland praised the work of the Task Force, which, he said, had demonstrated the ability of UNEP to respond rapidly to environmental emergencies. Switzerland was willing to support future such responses by UNEP.

30. Attention was drawn to freshwater initiatives at the regional level initiatives, including in the Amazon, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Caribbean regions. In that context, and recalling the proposal by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the Caribbean to be declared a special area for the purposes of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the representative of a Caribbean country welcomed the importance attached by UNEP to that region.

31. The representative of Thailand drew attention to his country's experience in marine and coastal environmental management and offered the Thai code of conduct for marine and coastal activities as a model for emulation by other countries in the ASEAN region.

32. Attention was drawn to a number of forthcoming international meetings, including on water, cleaner production and desertification, which participants at the current meeting were encouraged to attend.

33. In response to concerns expressed during the debate, the Executive Director reaffirmed, inter alia, the need to consider interlinkages with desertification and climate change and to explore alternative and renewable energy sources. Conceding that there might some overlaps between GIWA and GEMS, he reaffirmed the need for increased capacity-building in freshwater management and, in that connection, stressed the synergetic benefits to be derived from convention-twinning arrangements and the need to revitalize the Abidjan Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region. Noting the close interrelationship between tourism and the issues under consideration, he welcomed the decision in the United Nations system for UNEP to serve as task manager for tourism and, in that context, commended the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics for its proactive work in that area. He also paid tribute to IETC for its achievements, in particular, in the area of technology transfer, and recognized the need for its capacity to be strengthened.

IV. CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME TO THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2002-2005

34. Introducing the item, the Executive Director drew attention to his report on the contribution of UNEP to the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, which had been circulated to members of the Committee in document UNEP/HLC/4/2. He stressed the need for UNEP to be properly integrated in the United Nations medium-term plan and noted that the UNEP contribution to that plan was open for further consolidation and consideration. The draft contribution had been prepared in a consultative

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process with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP in Nairobi and with national Governments, and in collaboration with the representative of the Nairobi Chapter of the Group of 77.

35. The draft contribution was a forward-looking document, which endeavoured to draw interlinkages and dependencies between the various subprogrammes of UNEP. He drew attention to the functional integration of those subprogrammes: the aim had been to identify policy goals that cut across administrative boundaries, and not to remain within the confines of sectoral topics, following, instead, an integrated approach.

36. Mr. Leandro Arellano (Mexico), Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, commended the draft contribution to the High-level Committee, encouraging ministers and officials to enrich it with their own views.

37. Mr. German Garcia-Duran (Colombia), Chair of the Nairobi Chapter of the Group of 77, conveyed the Chapter's endorsement of the draft and urged the ministers and officials to give their approval.

38. Mr. Isslamet Poernomo (Indonesia), Chair of Subcommittee I of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, said that the consultative process followed in preparing the UNEP medium-term plan was an indication of the increased transparency in the organizations modus operandi. Commending the document to ministers and officials, as it was based on the Nairobi Declaration, he briefly reviewed the seven subprogrammes and said that Subcommittee I, recognizing the practical difficulties and constraints entailed in preparing a medium-term plan, endorsed the flexible approach followed, which would enable the plan to be updated on a regular basis.

39. All the representatives taking the floor expressed their approval of the draft medium-term plan, which was seen as a strategic instrument representing a solid base for planning. Attention was drawn to a number of issues, including, inter alia, the need for an analysis of interlinkages among environmental conventions, with a view to identifying processes common to different instruments and their underlying shared concerns; the need to focus on the issues of natural disasters; the important role played by UNEP in promoting the integration of environmental aspects in all United Nations programmes; the responsibility for UNEP to ensure that trade and environment played a mutually supportive role in the context of trade and development; the commendable efforts by UNEP to provide technical backstopping for countries' implementation of conventions; and the need for an integrated approach to address the problem of poverty, in the light of the awareness that there could be no sustainable environmental protection without the eradication of poverty.

40. A number of specific suggestions were made, with a view to enriching and improving the draft plan, including the need, inter alia, for stronger integration of environment and economic issues; for strengthened monitoring and information activities; for more information on the state of the environment; for better dissemination of the documents; for a stronger regional perspective in addressing environmental problems, which would enhance the effectiveness of that work; and for increased capacity-building for developing countries. In addition, UNEP was encouraged not to limit its

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role to that of advocacy but to pursue partnerships with other organizations, with a view, inter alia, to building capacity in developing countries for enforcement and to the promotion of research and development activities. UNEP was also requested to consider establishing a forum for environmental ministers from Africa and to give greater attention to the issue of environmental disasters.

41. With regard to regional cooperation, the representative of Turkey said that his country was establishing a regional environmental centre for countries in the region and in the Caucasus and he hoped that UNEP would support that initiative. The representative of a Central Asian country suggested that the medium-term plan should incorporate the establishment of a regional centre for the Central Asian region.

42. The representative of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) suggested that IUCN could play a role in the following three areas of the medium-term plan: policy development and law; the promotion of interlinkages among environmental conventions; and communication and public information activities.

43. In addition, several representatives submitted written comments containing possible amendments and improvements to the draft medium-term plan. Those submissions are contained in annex I to the present report.

44. Responding to concerns raised during the debate, the Executive Director reaffirmed that the integration of environmental issues and the eradication of poverty was a central focus of the work of UNEP and would be the subject of increased capacity-building efforts. In addition, with regard to the call for an increased focus on Africa, he recalled the decision by the Governing Council to declare Africa the fifth area of concentration for UNEP and noted the close cooperation with AMCEN. With regard to the issue of natural disasters and links with human settlements activities, he confirmed that UNEP was currently working with UNCHS (Habitat) in that area and noted the need to build on the synergies deriving from the co-location of different agencies in Nairobi. Finally, turning to the issue of the interrelationship of conventions, he confirmed that UNEP had been requested by the General Assembly to give attention to that matter.

45. Following those observations, the Committee agreed to endorse the medium-term plan.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 53/242 OF 28 JULY 1999:
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

46. Under the item, the Executive-Director introduced his report on the status of implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999, which had been circulated to members of the Committee in document UNEP/HLC/4/INF/2.

47. Following that introduction, Mr. Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), coordinator of the open-ended informal consultations of the General Assembly on the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements, reviewed the adoption process of resolution 53/242 and the

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successful efforts to achieve consensus on the resolution. In the consultations which he had coordinated, all major concerns had been allayed and participants had been able to overcome the initial dichotomy between those countries which had attached greater importance to the provisions of the report and those which had supported its procedure and mechanisms. He briefly reviewed the major provisions of the resolution, which included:

- (a) Strengthening of the United Nations office at Nairobi;
- (b) Increased cooperation and coordination among UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) activities;
- (c) Establishment of the Environmental Management Group;
- (d) Institution of an annual, ministerial-level environmental forum;
- (e) Enhanced linkages and coordination among the environment-related conventions;
- (f) Increased participation of major groups;
- (g) Strengthened capacity of UNEP in such areas as Information, monitoring and assessment of trends;
- (h) Increased role of capacity-building and technical assistance in the UNEP work programme; and
- (i) Enhanced roles of UNEP as an implementing agency of GEF and of UNCHS (Habitat) in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

48. In conclusion, he said that, in the context of, on the one hand, the proliferation of environmental institutions, arrangements and instruments in the United Nations system and, on the other, the process of reform of that system, it was essential for UNEP to have a sharper focus on its coordinating and synergetic function, so that it could play a paramount role in the United Nations system in the coming century.

49. In the ensuing discussion, there was broad agreement on the importance of the measures set forth in the General Assembly resolution and on the need for their prompt and effective implementation. A number of representatives also stressed, in that context, the need for the necessary financial resources and political will.

50. With regard to the establishment of the Environmental Management Group, a number of representatives stressed the need to ensure balance in membership of the Group, which, in the view of one representative, should be based on an issues-management system and, in the view of another representative, speaking on behalf of a regional economic integration organization, should be headed by the Executive Director, reporting directly to the Secretary-General. Another representative believed that, as the Group was to be an interagency body, its membership should be confined to the United Nations system. Several representatives voiced their opinions on the terms of reference of the Group, which, it was urged, should take full account of the views of

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developing countries and should focus on coordination aspects, in particular, between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat), with a view to promoting synergies.

51. The idea of holding annual sessions of the Governing Council was also broadly supported and several representatives affirmed the need for UNEP to be strengthened as the central global forum on the environment with a key role to play in coordinating the various environmental conventions and ensuring interaction with the cross-sectoral Commission on Sustainable Development.

52. One representative believed that the annual meetings of the Governing Council should focus on sustainable development and poverty, while another believed that they would pave the way to the formation of a future world environment organization.

53. There was also wide support for efforts to strengthen the United Nations presence in Nairobi and, in particular, to strengthen coordination between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat), as well as to enhance the role of UNEP in GEF.

54. In response to those views, the Executive Director reaffirmed the importance ascribed to those issues by UNEP and assured the Committee that they would be closely examined by the Governing Council. With regard to strengthening the United Nations presence in Nairobi, he drew attention, in particular, to the proposed extension of the conference facilities in Nairobi as outlined in his report on the construction project for that purpose, contained in document UNEP/HLC/4/INF/2/Add.1. Welcoming specific proposals put forward for items to be considered by the Governing Council at its special session in 2000, he assured the Committee that the agenda to be addressed at that special session would take stock of the interlinkages between environment and sustainable development and would be a truly millennium agenda.

VI. RESPONSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT TO THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBALIZATION

55. The panel discussion on the theme of globalization, agriculture and the environment was opened by the Executive Director, who introduced the members of the panel, namely: Mr. Mehmet Arda, Chief, Diversification and Natural Resources Section, Division of International Trade and Commodities, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); Ms. Geneviève De Bauw, Government and Public Affairs, Western Europe, Dow Chemicals; Mr. William H. Meyers, Chief, Agricultural Sector, Economic Development Service, FAO; Mr. Jorge A. Vigano, Counsellor, Trade and Environment Division, WTO; and Mr. Jack Wheelan, External Relations, International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFIA).

56. In his opening remarks, the Executive Director drew attention to a number of serious issues related to the topic under consideration, including the impact of pesticides on the environment; the problem of land erosion and the link between carbon sequestration capacity and agriculture; and the issue of eutrophication. Pointing out that all those issues were also related to trade, he stressed the need, in the run-up to the forthcoming session of WTO, to identify ways of integrating environmental and trade issues without using

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the environment as a kind of non-tariff barrier to trade. A technical discussion of the link between environment and agriculture at the current meeting was particularly useful, in view of the prominence of agricultural issues on the agenda of the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

57. The Executive Director also drew attention to the background document on the item, contained in document UNEP/HLC/4/3, on the response of the environment to the phenomenon of globalization.

58. In his presentation, Mr. Wheelan (IFIA) said that IFIA had some 500 members in 80 countries, and that more than half of its members were from developing countries, which in itself demonstrated the importance of the production and consumption of fertilizers in the developing world. IFIA also had close links with UNEP, through its Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, and was working on joint publications with the Division in such areas as the effects of fertilizers on environment and the benefits of fertilizers for food security and sustainable development. IFIA was interested in the issues of food security, but was also concerned by the related issues of water, climate change and trade and environment interlinkages, and was working on an input for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which, he said, offered an excellent opportunity to address such issues as water, climate change and trade and environment linkages.

59. He stressed the need for UNEP and Governments to understand the business perspective on globalization. Globalization, he said, was a series of political, social and economic interactions which had beneficial, as well as adverse effects. Globalization could be a vehicle for the fostering of good environmental policy and practice; for the expansion of direct foreign investment; for the promotion of trade in environmentally friendly technologies; and for the encouragement of scientific cooperation. He therefore urged UNEP to support the favourable aspects of globalization, in partnership with industry, and urged closer cooperation between UNEP and the business sector, for example, in implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, by promoting ways in which agriculture could be used to combat - rather than cause - land degradation.

60. Ms. De Bauw (Dow Chemicals) informed the Committee that Dow Chemicals, with operations in more than 150 countries, was a truly global organization and, accordingly, was concerned with the issue of globalization. In the field of agriculture, Dow activities were mainly in crop protection products and, to an increasing extent, biotechnology. The concept of sustainable agriculture was fully consistent with the company's own policy of promoting sustainable development and Dow Chemicals was committed to being a responsible player in the areas of both biotechnology and agricultural chemicals.

61. Drawing attention to the close links between the trade aspects of agriculture and the distribution of food, she stressed the need, in the coming millennium, for measures to ensure a better distribution of food supplies. Biotechnology, if applied in a transparent and responsible manner, could help address imbalances in that distribution. In addition, the business sector had an important role to play in capacity-building in

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sustainable agricultural practices, such as integrated pest management (IPM), through a partnership of all stakeholders, including the business community, the government sector and non-governmental organizations.

62. Among questions facing the chemical industry in the coming millennium, she noted, in particular, the need to develop a more judicious and targeted use of agricultural chemicals. The phenomenon of globalization called for globally coordinated policies that took into account the diversity of economic, political and social conditions. As a global concern, Dow Chemicals also faced those concerns and it therefore welcomed the initiative by UNEP to seek stakeholders' input into the formulation of environmental policies.

63. Mr. Meyers (FAO) said that FAO was fully committed to the sustainable use of environmental resources and that commitment informed all its activities. In addition, FAO was committed to the development of partnerships with UNEP and other organizations to achieve its goals, as exemplified by joint work on the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure and under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and by the long-standing integrated pest management (IPM) programme in south and south-east Asia, under which it harnessed social and economic benefits in a win-win programme.

64. While FAO recognized that biotechnology and, in particular, genetically modified organisms provided a powerful tool for sustainable food production, it favoured a cautious approach to the release of products and stressed the need for proper risk assessment. At the same time, FAO accepted that responsibility for policy in biotechnology remained with countries themselves. Farmers should be encouraged to apply production systems in a sustainable way, such as through a judicious mix of organic, biological and chemical nutrients and the application of conservation tillage, or even no-till systems. To that end, Governments and organizations like FAO must ensure that farmers received the best available information and provided an appropriate enabling policy environment to encourage the introduction of sustainable agricultural production.

65. He stressed the importance of integrated planning and harmonization of national policies on natural resources and the environment among various ministries and stakeholders to ensure that conflicting goals were resolved and farmers were not faced with conflicting or frequently changing incentive structures.

66. Mr. Arda (UNCTAD) pointed out that agriculture was the least globalized and, therefore, least liberalized sector under WTO, therefore, any future advances towards globalization would inevitably have a heavy impact on agriculture. Agriculture had both positive and negative impacts on the environment and it was important through the judicious use of technology, to ensure that agriculture actually improved such resources as soil, biodiversity and water. In addition to the factors affecting agricultural practices already mentioned by other speakers, he drew attention, in particular, to consumer preferences in importing countries.

67. Globalization should lead to a better allocation of resources, in accordance with the comparative advantage of each country, and, in agriculture, it could help redress the imbalance between the respective

shares of developing and developed countries in agricultural exports, provided market-disturbing factors were removed and resources given their proper value. To that end, it was important to establish what the effects of globalization were on the economy in general; on economic conditions in a given country; and on how producers would respond to changes in economic conditions.

68. In that process, it was essential to combine various types of expertise, such as provided by FAO, UNEP and UNCTAD, so as to harness the resulting synergies and to exploit the comparative advantages of each organization. In conclusion, he stressed the need, when addressing the impact of globalization and when choosing appropriate policies, to take account of the essential requirements of the world's poor.

69. Mr. Vigano (WTO) said that agriculture had always been treated in a different way in the trade agenda over the years: the rules applicable to agriculture were more relaxed and subsidies were allowed. Only in 1994, at the end of the Uruguay round, did a package of commitments emerge containing liberalization elements and leading to a reduction of protective measures in agriculture. There was a commitment to continue negotiations on such measures at the end of the current six-year reform process, i.e., in 2000. Trade negotiations in that area were still under way.

70. Agriculture continued to be promoted by many members of WTO as a sector for liberalization. While some members felt that the removal of subsidies could have a negative impact on the environment, studies had also shown that international trade liberalization was, in general, a positive phenomenon where the environment was concerned, although national circumstances could neutralize those benefits.

71. Noting that a new round of liberalization was to be launched in 2000, which would include agriculture, he called on all members to consider, in the light of current improved knowledge of links between trade and the environment, what contribution they could make to the process, which, in the long-run, would have implications for the environment.

VII. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS FOR THE PERIOD 1999-2001

72. The High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials was established pursuant to Governing Council decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, which, inter alia, gave it the mandate to make reform and policy recommendations and to provide advice to the Executive Director on emerging environmental issues.

73. At the Committee's fourth meeting, on 1 November 1999, the representative of Mexico, supported by the representatives of Argentina, Finland, on behalf of member States of the European Union, and Kenya, proposed that the mandate of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials should be reviewed by the Governing Council at its next session. That proposal was made in the light of the decision by the General Assembly that the Governing Council of UNEP should thenceforth meet on an annual basis, which might render the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials redundant or, at the very least, necessitate the reform of its role.

74. Accordingly, at its fourth meeting, the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials decided not to elect a new Bureau and agreed, instead, that the existing Bureau should remain in office. In accordance with the system of rotation adopted by the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries, the post of Vice-Chair held by that region passed to the representative of Peru.

75. The Committee further agreed that the Bureau should submit a report to the Governing Council, at its next session, containing proposals on the future of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials.

VIII. OTHER MATTERS

76. Under the item, Mr. Bagher Asadi, Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), informed the Committee on progress in the IFF process, the prospects for the fourth session of IFF and his perceptions of the future role of UNEP. Noting that the fourth and final session of IFF would be taking place in New York from 31 January to 11 February 2000, he expressed appreciation to UNEP for its support to IFF, including through the secondment of a senior officer to the IFF secretariat and for its implementation of key elements of the IFF programme of work, within the Interagency Task Force on Forests (ITFF). He stressed the need for the continued active participation by a revitalized UNEP, providing the environmental dimension in future international arrangements and mechanisms on forests, as decided by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its forthcoming eighth session. In particular, UNEP could play three critical roles in future forest policy, namely, providing leadership; enhancing partnership; and strengthening coordination.

77. With regards to its leadership role, UNEP would have a key role in facilitating implementation of the IFF proposals for action in the three programme elements under its responsibility, namely, needs of countries with low forest cover; underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation; and forest conservation and protected areas.

78. With regard to its partnership role, UNEP should make a substantive contribution in the areas of trade and environment in relation to forest products and services; the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to support sustainable forest management; forest biological diversity; and criteria and indicators for forest sustainability.

79. With regard to its coordination role, UNEP should promote synergies among different environment-related and forest-related international agreements, in support of the commission on sustainable development decision on international arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

80. In conclusion, he stressed the need for continued high-level and active participation of UNEP in ITFF and also urged ministers and high-level officials in charge of environment to pursue strengthened cooperation between the environment department and the forest sector in their respective countries.

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IX. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

81. In view of the time constraints at the meeting, the Committee decided to entrust the Rapporteur, working in consultation with the secretariat, with the preparation of the report of the meeting. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that decision.

X. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

82. In his concluding statement, the Executive Director said that the perhaps over-ambitious agenda set for the fourth meeting of the Committee was an indication of the high level of interest in, and importance of, the issues which it addressed. He invited participants to submit to the UNEP secretariat, in writing, their comments and views on those issues, which would then serve as an input to the Governing Council.

83. Following those closing remarks, the fourth meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials was declared closed at 6.15 p.m on 1 November 1999.

Annex I

SUGGESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND
OFFICIALS ON ISSUES BEFORE THE COMMITTEE AT ITS FOURTH MEETING

A. Submission by the European Union, relating to the contribution by UNEP
to the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005
(agenda item 4)

84. The European Union welcomes the medium-term plan of UNEP and compliments the secretariat for the high standard of the programme, representing a solid base for planning. The medium-term plan is of great importance as a strategic instrument orienting the future work of the United Nations. Accordingly, the European Union considers it important that the future corresponding plans of UNEP will be discussed by the Governing Council, taking also into account a strategy for stable, adequate and predictable funding for UNEP and bearing in mind the coming tasks of UNEP in the light of the guidance from the comprehensive review of Agenda 21 in 2002.

85. In the sector of environmental information, assessment and early warning, the European Union compliments UNEP for the publishing of the Global Environmental Outlook report series, that in itself represents a cornerstone in the large spectrum of environmental information. UNEP has created a well-developed and active system of collaborating centres and the European Union underlines the importance of this work also in the future. The third report in the GEO series will be a valuable contribution from UNEP in the preparation for a successful outcome of the Earth Summit in 2002.

86. In the field of environmental policy development and law, the European Union underlines the important role of UNEP in exploring how environmental aspects could be better integrated in United Nations programmes and in promoting practical experiences of environmental integration in close cooperation with other relevant United Nations agencies. This forms the core of the normative activities of UNEP and the European Union would like to reiterate its earlier proposal to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Montevideo Programme II and to prepare a new strategic environmental law programme for the first decade of the next millennium. Among the issues the new programme should include are assessment and early warning and making environmental information available to the public without delay.

87. In its own activities, the European Union has had as a guiding principle an improved access to environmental information for the public and is pleased to note that the importance of this is recognized in the plan. This principle has a bearing both on subprogramme 2, on environmental policy development and law, and on subprogramme 7, on communications and public information.

88. The European Union is of the opinion that the policy and advisory services of UNEP, particularly in the area of trade and environment, are essential elements of the UNEP programme and that UNEP should contribute to ensuring that trade and environment become mutually supportive in favour of sustainable development, especially also in the context of a new trade round. UNEP needs to concentrate on its areas of expertise and cooperate effectively

with UNCTAD and WTO. UNEP can play a role by identifying ways to promote positive synergies and win-win-win situations between trade, environment and development. It should also promote the integration of internationally agreed environmental principles, in particular the precautionary principle, into the international trading system. UNEP should contribute to the clarification of the relationship between multilateral environmental agreements and WTO rules. It should promote environmental expertise in the WTO dispute-settlement procedures. Finally, UNEP has a contribution to make to cooperation and information exchange with WTO, in order to promote the trade community's awareness of the rationale of using trade measures in certain multilateral environmental agreements.

B. Submission by Japan, relating to the issue of globalization, agriculture and the environment

89. We understand that document UNEP/HLC/4/3, under this agenda item, reviews the negative environmental impacts of agricultural activities, without provision of benefits to the environment. It also points out some of the negative environmental impacts of the agricultural policy itself. It seems to us that the basic tone of this discussion in the document is based only on aspects of agriculture because it focuses on the environmental negative externality of agriculture, and explains only destructive environmental impacts of government subsidies for agriculture.

90. Taking the nature of this document into consideration, we think it necessary to point out the economical externality of agriculture and appropriate agricultural policy, which has positive environmental impacts, in order to discuss this issue on balance. We acknowledge that, among the negotiations on the Agreement on Agriculture of WTO, payments for environmental programmes were exempted from reduction commitments. This fact proves that there exist some useful measures under the agricultural policy.

91. We would therefore like to propose that a review of the positive environmental externality of agriculture and the handling of domestic agricultural policy in the Agreement on Agriculture of the WTO should be included in document UNEP/HLC/4/3. The amendments proposed by the European Union are provided below.

92. We think it important to investigate and assess the environmental impact of agriculture to a much greater extent and it is necessary for UNEP to do this in order to contribute to the discussions in other international organizations such as Commission on Sustainable Development.

Amendment 1: After paragraph 13, the following paragraph should be inserted:

"On the other hand, agricultural production has positive external effects such as flood and sediment flow prevention by terraced fields or by maintaining rural landscapes. In some cases, farmers may not be remunerated for the environmental benefits that they generate, while certain revenues from the provision of agri-environmental services constitute an incentive to maintain or enhance beneficial environmental outputs. Such beneficial environmental impacts will not be achieved when

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farming activities related to positive environmental outputs are abandoned."

Amendment 2: After paragraph 16, the following should be inserted:

"In some developed countries, agriculture has contributed to the provision of wildlife habitats and maintenance of biodiversity when farmers adopt good farming practices which are appropriate to regional agri-environmental conditions."

Amendment 3: The whole of paragraph 18 should be deleted.

Amendment 4: The last two sentences of paragraph 19 should be deleted and the following should be inserted:

"The positive and negative effects of agriculture on the environment have become an important issue to consider in designing new agricultural and environmental measures. Such effects have a growing impact in modifying existing agricultural support programmes and evaluating projects in the agri-food sector."

Amendment 5: Paragraph 21 should be deleted.

Amendment 6: The following phrase in paragraph 22 should be deleted:
"Since the 1950s, Industrialized countries ... environmental implication and distort trade"

Amendment 7: After paragraph 24, the following two paragraphs should be inserted:

"At the same time, the positive effects of agriculture on the environment should not be overlooked. Having become more aware of the significance of global climate change and the necessity of environmental conservation, many countries have started to use agricultural policies such as domestic support measures to encourage so-called 'environment-friendly' agriculture. Moreover, Governments have started to use support measures to realize the multifunctionality of agriculture. The concept has been intensively discussed in international forums such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and have been acknowledged by the international community.

"One of the major achievements of the negotiations in the Uruguay Round was to establish a clear distinction between various kinds of domestic support. The distinction was based on a consideration as to whether or not the support would distort trade in agriculture or have effects on production. As a consequence, in the Agreement on Agriculture of WTO some support measures that have no, or at the most only minimal, trade-distorting effects were exempted from reduction commitments. For instance, payments for environmental programmes

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were categorized into so-called "Green Box" measures, while trade-distorting supports, such as market price support, were grouped into the "Amber Box". This was a clear departure from the past preconceived notion that almost all domestic support on agriculture had some negative effects on trade, and even more, on environment. This indicates that there is a growing recognition of some of the positive impacts that agricultural supports have, even for the environment."

Amendment 8: Paragraph 26 should be replaced by the following:

"The WTO Agreement on Agriculture represents only a partial liberalization agreement; quantitative reductions in support to agriculture are relatively small and spread over several years. For that reason, a large degree of distortion in the world agricultural commodities market will remain, even after the complete implementation of reduction commitments. Though the built-in agenda of the Agreement on Agriculture, however, future discussions are poised to reduce the remaining barriers still further."

Amendment 9: The whole of paragraph 28 should be deleted.

Amendment 10: In line 5 of paragraph 29, the phrase "that \$13 billion is lost per year" should be replaced by the phrase "that \$13 billion is spent per year".

Amendment 11: In line 7 of paragraph 29, the phrase "thus increasing water pollution and soil degradation" should be replaced by the phrase "thus increasing the risk of misuse of these chemicals that result in water pollution and soil degradation".

C. Submission by the United States of America, relating to the contribution by UNEP to the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (agenda item 4)

1. Paragraph 35, chapeau:

(a) We believe that the first sentence should read: "Building on and consistent with the Nairobi Declaration ...";

(b) We also request further clarification of what UNEP will do "... to develop appropriate policy responses ...", as indicated in the sixth line of the chapeau. Policy responses are the job of Governments and we would like to understand the expected role of UNEP in this regard.

2. Subparagraph 35 (b): The term "advocate" implies a less than neutral stance in addressing policy measures. "Neutrality" is one of the most important assets of UNEP and it must be protected. We believe that the sentence should read: "To identify and help further develop the use of appropriate policy measures ..." (continue with original text from this point).

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3. Subparagraph 35 (c): The subpoints following subparagraph (c) repeat subparagraphs (a) and (c) and are unnecessary. This subparagraph also again uses the word "advocacy" and it is not clear why only (c) has detail. We suggest cutting the subparagraph to include only the first sentence of subparagraph (c).
4. Subparagraph 35 (d): This subparagraph repeats subparagraph (c) and is unnecessary.
5. Paragraph 37: Contains two "c's." Should these be relettered or was one supposed to be cut?
6. Subparagraph 37 (e): Add "where appropriate" after "environmental issues ...", since the mandate of the Environmental Management Group is limited to recommendations and it is not intended to have executive authority.
7. Subparagraph 46 (b): We believe that UNEP should look not only at root causes of environmental concerns, the issue which is mentioned, but also at efforts to build capacity and expertise, particularly in the developing world, to address those existing concerns.
8. Subparagraph 46 (b): We believe that reference to GEO should be deleted from the last line, because priorities for policy development should not be limited to GEO, but should include results of all aspects of the new monitoring and assessment programme.
9. Subparagraph 47 (d): At the end, add " ... while keeping in mind the United Nations General Assembly-approved informal consultative process on oceans and seas, which also seeks to improve international cooperation and coordination."

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS
AND OFFICIALS AT ITS FOURTH MEETING

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Title</u>
UNEP/HLC/4/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/HLC/4/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda
UNEP/HLC/4/2	Contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme to the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005
UNEP/HLC/4/3	Response of the environment to the phenomenon of globalization
UNEP/HLC/3/5	Report of the third meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials
UNEP/HLC/4/INF/1	Report of the Executive Director on recent activities of the United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/HLC/4/INF/2	Report of the Executive Director on the status of implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999: Report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements
UNEP/HLC/4/INF/3	List of documents before the fourth meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials
UNEP/HLC/4/INF/4	Statement by the Nairobi Chapter of the Group of 77 and China on General Assembly resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999, on the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements, and the Ministerial Declaration of the twenty-third annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, New York, 24 September 1999
UNEP/HLC/4/INF/5	List of participants
